

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 00882 01 OF 02 171740Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 ACDA-12 MCE-00 AID-05 IGA-02
OMB-01 TRSE-00 /068 W
-----032424 171805Z /53

O P 171723Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4855
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
DA WASHDC
JCS WASHDC
USDEL MC BRUSSELS
USNMR SHAPE
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 00882

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MASS, MORG, MPOL, NATO, PO, GW
SUBJECT: TANKS FOR PORTUGAL: NEW PROBLEM

REFS: A) GUSSMAN-MELTON TELCON, JAN 13
B) GUSSMAN-PENDLETON TELCON, JAN 13
C) BONN 20328 DTG 071721Z DEC 77

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED
OVER PORTUGUESE DELAY IN SIGNING A BILATERAL FRG-
PORTUGUESE AGREEMENT SETTING FORTH THE CONDITIONS
UNDER WHICH THE 18 M-48 TANKS OF A-5 CONFIGURATION WILL
BE PROVIDED TO PORTUGAL. THE GERMANS FEAR THE
PORTUGUESE WILL NOT SIGN IT IN TIME FOR THE GERMAN
GOVERNMENT TO SIGN THE CURRENT U.S. LETTER OF OFFER
ON THE CONVERSION OF THE TANKS PRIOR TO ITS EXPIRATION
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PAGE 02 BONN 00882 01 OF 02 171740Z

ON JANUARY 31. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LISBON IS WORKING
ON THIS PROBLEM, AND WE URGE THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE
TO RESOLVE IT BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY. WE HAVE JUST
HAD A DISTURBING REPORT FROM THE FRG DEFENSE MINISTRY
THAT A SENIOR PORTUGUESE MILITARY OFFICER HAS ORDERED A
STUDY TO DETERMINE WHETHER PORTUGAL REALLY NEEDS THE
TANKS. WE WOULD WELCOME ANY INFORMATION

LISBON CAN DEVELOP ON THIS REPORT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY (DANNENBRING, HEAD OF NATO AFFAIRS) HAS EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN TO THE EMBASSY OVER A NEW DIFFICULTY WHICH COULD DELAY THE DISPATCH OF TANKS TO PORTUGAL. DANNENBRING SAID THAT, SHORTLY AFTER THE FAVORABLE DECISION BY THE BUNDESTAG BUDGET COMMITTEE ON DECEMBER 7 (REF C), THE FRG PRESENTED THE PORTUGUESE WITH A DRAFT BILATERAL AGREEMENT SETTING FORTH THE WELL-KNOWN SCENARIO OF HOW THE TANKS WOULD BE PROVIDED TO PORTUGAL AND CONFIRMING THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF TANKS WHICH WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE. DANNENBRING SAID THE FRG EXPECTED QUICK PORTUGUESE SIGNATURE OF THE AGREEMENT BUT THAT SUCH HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE.

2. DANNENBRING POINTED OUT THAT THE FRG COULD NOT SIGN THE U.S. LETTER OF OFFER FOR THE NECESSARY CONVERSION OF THE TANKS IN THE U.S. UNTIL THE PORTUGUESE HAD SIGNED THE ABOVE-MENTIONED BILATERAL AGREEMENT, OR AT LEAST PUT THEIR SIGNATURE TO SOME KIND OF LESS FORMAL DOCUMENT INDICATING THEIR WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE THE TANKS. HE SAID THAT TO PROCEED IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY DOCUMENT SIGNED BY THE PORTUGUESE WAS UNACCEPTABLE SINCE IT COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS WITH THE BUNDESTAG, WHICH HAD ONLY GRUDGINGLY APPROVED THE CONCEPT OF CONVERTING THE TANKS IN THE U.S. WITH GERMAN FUNDS. DANNENBRING FEARED THAT

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PAGE 03 BONN 00882 01 OF 02 171740Z

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PAGE 01 BONN 00882 02 OF 02 171741Z
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4856
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 00882

THE PORTUGUESE MIGHT NOT TAKE ACTION IN TIME FOR THE
GERMAN GOVERNMENT TO SIGN THE CURRENT U.S. LETTER OF
OFFER BEFORE IT EXPIRES ON JANUARY 31.

3. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT LISBON IS
FULLY AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM AND WORKING HARD TO ENSURE
ITS RESOLUTION BEFORE THE END OF THIS MONTH (REF A).
WE WOULD WISH ONLY TO UNDERSCORE THE GERMAN - AND OUR
OWN - CONCERN ON THIS QUESTION. IF THE LETTER OF OFFER
WERE TO EXPIRE AGAIN WITHOUT GERMAN SIGNATURE, THE
GERMANS WOULD PRESUMABLY HAVE TO PAY A HIGHER PRICE FOR
THE CONVERSION OF THE TANKS. THIS COULD FURTHER IRK THE
ALREADY GROUCHY BUNDESTAG BUDGET COMMITTEE. AT THE VERY
LEAST IT COULD HARM RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FOREIGN
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PAGE 02 BONN 00882 02 OF 02 171741Z

MINISTRY AND THE BUNDESTAG; AT WORST IT COULD LEAD TO
SECOND THOUGHTS WITHIN THE BUDGET COMMITTEE ABOUT ITS
AGREEMENT TO FUND THE CONVERSION IN THE U.S.

4. THE EMBASSY URGES THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO
RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM WELL BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY.

5. THE CHIEF OF ODC HAS JUST BEEN TOLD BY A WORKING-
LEVEL SOURCE IN THE FRG DEFENSE MINISTRY THAT A SENIOR
PORTUGUESE MILITARY OFFICER HAS ORDERED A STUDY TO
DETERMINE WHETHER PORTUGAL REALLY NEEDS THE TANKS.
LISBON MIGHT WISH TO LOOK INTO THIS REPORT, AND WE
WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS BY LISBON ON IT. WE ASSUME
THAT PORTUGUESE POLITICAL AUTHORITY WILL UNDERSTAND
THE NEED TO ACCEPT THE TANKS PROMPTLY FOR REASONS OF
ALLIANCE SOLIDARITY AND BECAUSE OF ALL THE GERMAN
GOVERNMENT HAS GONE THROUGH TO ENSURE THAT THE TANKS
COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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